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William
Bentley
on The
Black
Experience

New
Fall Classes

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Interview:

William Bentley on the Black Experience in America

Q. Could you now reflect a little bit about this week at Fox?

A. Well, I would have to say that I felt almost from beginning to end a feeling of acceptance. I felt while there were things I said and had felt I had to say were abrasive, and cutting, and sometimes irritating. I felt nevertheless on a whole there was an acceptance of me as a person and the right to bring the viewpoints I brought. I would say during the week I did not encounter anything substantial that modified that opinion.

Q. Is racism unique in some ways among colleges?

A. Oh no. Long before kids and young people get to college, long before they become college educators and administrators they experience it. I would say that college is the kind of environment in which it might stand out more clearly, but I would say long before (and even after the college experience is over) racism exists. We feel that it permeates the society from top to bottom.

Q. Does it manifest itself uniquely on campus?

A. It manifests itself uniquely on campus. It just briefly there. A number of ways of campus life are peculiar to campus life. Like the intellectual and the pursuit of the intellectual for example, or in the attempts of socialization it might tend to manifest itself in a peculiar way there, but any way that it would manifest itself would be dependent upon the dynamics on a given college campus.

Q. You mentioned during the week real incompleteness of the education systems. How does George Fox compare? Is it through an addition of Black History or is it the addition of that viewpoint in the History Class?

A. Well, I would think that it would be both. I think that also whether they have white students or black students or not they need a Department of Ethnic Studies that will include the Black viewpoint. I believe that it should be a required course rather than optional one. In most cases it is an optional course which as Dr. Green says neither Blacks nor Whites take. Blacks feel they're Black and they don't need to study about themselves. Whites feel they shouldn't be required to do it because most of them are not going to be working or living around Blacks anyway, and everybody sort of regards it as sort of superfluous. But I feel that it should be compulsory even as other subjects which we study are regarded as compulsory subjects also.

Q. How much do continued references to Blackness and Whiteness in a week like this aggravate racism?

A. There is a chance that it will, and that's a calculated risk. Doing nothing on one hand or failing to mention this will also intensify racial feelings of another kind or maybe within another group. So you're

sort of "damned if you do and damned if you don't," but in the interest of raising the level of awareness. Some people really are not aware of the full implication of racism in American culture. For example, how deeply inbedded it is, not only in our religious institutions, but in our educational institutions. The graduate schools which "prepare" scholars for dealing with these problems, that in itself assumes a certain kind of bias. Now the question is whether we are going to ignore that by not saying anything or by exposing them and forcing educators to react and do something about these conditions. I am sure that it may be better to raise the questions until the level of awareness is raised so that we can deal with these things realistically.

Q. What should now happen at George Fox College?

A. The first thing, of course, in my own limited objective was to bring levels of awareness and consciousness. I feel that where there was perhaps fuzziness about some things my over-emphasizing and stressing my over-emphasizing and stressing certain things almost to the detriment 'to others,' should have changes and ways of looking at things that are necessary. For example, I thought of a faculty member who said I had come across as very abrasive and he had begun to react negatively, and of course this is what I felt was necessary. My remarks were geared toward producing that kind of reaction with people because I feel people will think better, when they're emotionally aroused and involved.

Q. What would inhibit that which should happen?

A. Well, I think the other side of it. Folks who would refuse to become aware, and there are people who would close up on the basis of the

A graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary, Rev. Bentley is currently the President of the National Black Evangelical Association, as well as involved in many activities seeking to truly liberate the black man in the world today. The Rev. Bentley, and his wife, Dr. Ruth Bentley, led the students of George Fox College through an eye opening week of increased awareness in the miniterm, "The Black Experience in America"

method of my presentation or who would feel that the material that I produced showed only one side of the story. I would see that more than anything else as inhibitive. In other words I would see something conscious and consciously known by people rather than something unconscious. If there is resistance it would be deliberate rather than unknowing.

Q. Reactions to pointing out the inadequacy in education for instance Graduate Schools even more can recreate the Watergate syndrome, "Well, who can we trust?" Who Can We Trust?

A. That's a good question. I think you can trust anyone who is trustworthy. I think to a great extent we need to transvalue or maybe to trans-trust trust. Broken down that means to me that where people have told the truth they should be regarded as trustworthy, where people have not told the truth we need to get into the roots of why they have not. Like I said before the most serious indictment on the Graduate Schools is either they knew about this material that is coming to the front now and suppressed it (in which case it would say something about their ethics) or they did not know about it, in which case you would say there was something wrong with their knowledge, or with their professional competence. In either case, there is no excuse for the Graduate Schools not including this kind of viewpoint as a serious part of the total curriculum that graduate students are exposed to. To me it is unthinkable that anyone could graduate from Harvard or Yale and come out totally ignorant of the Black Experience in America. That's just not education.

Q. What was your initial reaction to coming to George Fox?

A. Well like I say before I knew Aaron. I knew Aaron had been active with the Friends and several of their institutions including George Fox College, and I found out later as I got here that I knew one of the Pastors of the Friends Churches in Newberg, Ron Woodward, but mainly because I knew Aaron and I knew what he had been trying to do for several years. I was very favorable. I had worked with him, with any ambivalence I had because of it.

Q. It appears that there is unity among Black people that transcends such things as denomination and religious boundaries, and also the lack of divorce between the spiritual and social concerns. Do Blacks have

something to teach Whites about the meaning of Evangelism?

A. Yes, I think the approach which looks upon people purely in terms of their soul (and you have a soul and of course that's what needs to be saved, but the holistic approach to evangelism) is something that some Blacks can teach some Whites. Many Blacks of course use the same evangelistic techniques that they have learned at Bible Schools and Colleges, and try to apply these to the Black Situation, and they're sometimes successful and sometimes not as successful. There are traditional Black Evangelists who are not trained in White schools of higher learning. They have an ability to empathize and get right in where the people are. I think the techniques that they have, and the strategies that they have developed, can be taught within classes in personal and group evangelism. They can make a contribution at the Bible College and Theological Seminary level.

Q. How much of this unity in affliction, in some cases it might appear to White Christians to be lowering the Christian Standards. Why do you associate with your Black brother who is not a Christian closer than your White brother who is? What is the reaction to that observation?

A. I don't automatically (many Christians don't) choose friends on the basis of whether they are Christians or not. Secondly, even though I might have more in common in Christ with a White Christian, I may not have as much in common when it comes to where he lives and the different institutions that we're parts of and so it's a question that you have to answer in terms of levels of involvement. Theoretically and in actuality I do have more in common in terms of my relationship with Christ with Christians whether they're White or Black, that being aside I might have more things in common with a Black person who is not a Christian who would understand the Black Experience and the Black Hurt and so forth. Although Christians see the Black experience as much more than a hurt, at any rate it is something we can identify with, whereas I could not with my White Christian Brother.

Q. What is your impression of the new Black films? Compare the meanings behind a film like Shaft or Superfly with "Sounder."

A. Well, obviously I identify with Sounder much more positively than I do with what we call the "Black Exploitation Film," but I can see the need



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or at least the rationale behind the production of the BlackSploitation film. There's an awful lot of hostility in the Black Community which may have been drained off five years ago by the demonstrations in the streets. It may be drained off in the past several years by cheering for the Black who rips the man up in these BlackSploitation films. For example Shaft is a Black Superman in a kind of way, and Superfly and others who really "do it to the man." Now they really don't do it to the man except in the film because when the film is over the same conditions still reveal in the society. It gives some Blacks an economic outlet for acting, others it gives other things. With reference to Sounder, Sounder presents, you would have to say, only one side of life, even as a BlackSploitation is bound to.

Q. When you were talking about cultural pluralism and that we need to respect each other's cultures, it seems to me that it goes beyond that. It's always a positive thing to see dress styles that are different from mine and it's an enriching experience. What are the steps taken to help black people realize their own culture and the beauty of their contribution?

A. Some of this we are attempting to do at our National Black Student Conference in November in Chicago Nov. 1, 2, and 3. We are meeting in what we call a closed family group. That is entirely Black. We are not even being interviewed by the White Press. We are getting together for the purpose of discussing some of the very same things you are talking about, and I think that this is one of the best ways of doing particularly in view of the fact that Blacks begin to be accepted more and more into the main stream. Not only in Chris-

tianity but Main Stream America. Many of them tend to leave their Black identity behind, and what this does is devastating. We want to get together, explore and think these things among ourselves, and one of the chief reasons for doing it is that we can do it in the kind of freedom that we could not do in the presence of Whites who would not understand all the subtle involvements. We would have to spend much of our time explaining what we meant to our White brothers. Rather than take the time

A. Because they are so efficient in what they are doing. They are perceived as a threat because they not only talk unity they practice it, and they are probably the most unified group within the Black Community. I think people still react to Malcolm X and to the early Malcom X where he made many pronouncements which were calculated to frighten Whites. The Black Panthers really came to power not so much because of their ideology which was childish, but because they demonstrated



DR. RUTH BENTLEY discusses student question with Aaron Hamlin, who was largely responsible for the Bentleys coming to Fox.

to do it that we decided at this first student meeting we would get together and air the things that are basic agreements or basic importance among us as Blacks.

Q. What is the best way of a person to rid himself of stereotypes... "I think Blacks could make it if they worked" or something like that?

A. One of the things as I understand it we've been trying to do here during this week is to produce the ability to empathize. The act of empathizing or the experience of empathizing makes it almost impossible to continue the whole stereotype view of people because you then put yourself in a place with the other person, and when you see things happening to him as you put yourself in his place they happen to you. Then you know exactly how he feels. This is of course very Biblical, Jesus told us in the Golden Rule; "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." I think this is the best way to break down stereotypes.

Q. The Black Muslims really scare White Christians, more than a strong White denomination that is not Christian. Why?

the ability to stand up to the White Police Department like nobody had ever done before, and that captured the imagination of the young Black who many times had been victims of the Police Department. Incidentally in connection with that, J.J. for example in the T.V. series Good Times. I understand that J.J. was picked up by the Police "because he looked

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like a suspect." Now that obviously happens to both White and Black people, but in the case of J.J. it demonstrated how much easier it is for Black people to be picked up even when no crime has been committed than would be the case with White kids.

I'm saying here we're talking about a fear that is based on efficiency. The Muslims are very efficient. They talk, but they do, and they back up what they say by what they do, and I think that they're regarded as a sinister organization. When they get enough power they might challenge some of our legitimate institutions within our society. I think that's why they fear them more than the Panthers. Another thing, the Muslims cannot be infiltrated like the Panthers. The Panthers were childishly easily infiltrated. Someone said at the height of the Panther movement that two out of every three members was an informer. It was with ridiculous ease that the government could sneak people in and pay them to inform on the Panthers, but that cannot be done in the Muslims.


Q. If a community group would want to investigate those laws that exist that are discriminatory or that are downright immoral, do they go down to the city council and just start reading through the laws or is there a process for political action in communities?

A. Yes, there is probably more than one way to do it. Sometimes we don't know what the law is 'til we've come up against it and broken it and there are many people within the society who have broken laws and we can get to know about that law by hearing what is happening to that person as a result of having broken it. Let me give you an example called the Scotsborough case in which a group of nine Black fellows who were hobnobbing on a car. One of the stops along the line, a White fellow got on with at least one White girl. The girl was very free with her favors with anybody. In the car, in the course of riding through the night she exchanged her favors not only with the White fellow but sharing them with all the nine Black fellows too, but when they were caught, to get out of it she hollered rape. The White fellow got off free, they chased him out of town and the White girl said under oath that she had lied but the story was that anytime a Black man spent overnight with a White woman something went on so they were nine times worse, so they put the poor fellows in jail, and only the intervention

of the Communist Party for example saved them. The Communist made this a notorious case all over the country, so that unfavorable publicity caused them to delay giving the death penalty, so most of the boys died in jail. The fact that it was made celebrity news meant that the attention of the country and the world was focused on what happened down there in Alabama, and probably saved the lives of those fellows. Another example is the fact that Martin Luther King did start essentially without White help. Once the movement was going there were many Whites who identified with him and the rightness of what he was doing even though he was breaking the regular laws and he was willing to take whatever consequences went along by following him. It's doubtful that Martin Luther King would have gotten as far as he did if he had not had some White support also. A lot of White young and middleaged idealists went along with helping him. I think the same kind of has to happen with regard to unjust laws. I think Whites can do a lot when it comes to helping because there are things that Whites can do that Blacks cannot do. Whites are a part of the power sector. Individually they may not have any power themselves but they are part of a power sector into which they can plug. Blacks are not a part of that power sector so Whites who have knowledge and who have empathy and insight can exert whatever influence they are able to bring to bear upon the power structure to bring about meaningful social change. I think that this is the area of laws we have to think in.

Q. The White Church is too silent. How valuable would be an action on the part of a large inner city church, even though all white, of making a statement as a body, regarding

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some issues or event?

A. If the church is already within the city. Particularly if you're talking about the Blacks and other Ethnic minorities who inhabit the inner city. If that church were a part of the community it would have a much greater voice. If it was a church that really served as a base gathering people who lived outside the city for the purpose of ministering to the city we would have much less faith among minorities. So I don't think it's an automatic thing. I think that it would be a start if it was a community based church, it would be a start. If not, we would have much more difficulty with the problem of credibility.



PORTIA JONES talks over Miniterm session with Eddie Hill.

Q. I'm kind of interested in how you would see our involvement as the school paper in continuance to what has happened in the week.

A. Well, like all papers and all media of communication you try not only to inform people but to influence public opinion, and it seems to me those two functions can be pressed into service in helping to make more extensive and more real and more lasting the experience of this last week. For example the ideas that have been discussed and ideas are ideas that are true and always relevant, fairness, honesty, Christian love, hope for the future, working together, these are things it seems to me that are many concrete examples will come in the course of gathering material for your paper.

GIVEN TIME RETURNS

by Jamie Martin



Given Time is a young up-and-coming group from George Fox College, consisting of seven very talented musicians. They have just recently returned from a tour which took them from the western coast to Chicago and from Alberta, Canada, south to Juarez, Mexico. Before their actual tour began, they spent a solid two weeks devoted to nothing but prayer and practice. From talking with a few of the members of the group about the tour, they expressed to me that the two weeks of prayer and practice contained some of the most valuable and profitable experiences of the tour. The tour lasted 56 days, and during this time the group played in churches, high schools, parks, a Naval Base, and their favorite, the Spokane World's Fair. Before they left, the group

HAPPILY POSING before their tour of the U.S., back row from left is Tim Schwanke, Sharon Jones, Roger Hadley and Walt Everly. Front from left, Dave Jones, Carla Main, and last but not least, Mark Williams

produced an album featuring some of the songs they performed on tour and will probably be performing at their October 9 concert at Woodmar Hall. There they will be having albums on sale.

The group has made what I consider a worthwhile request. They have asked that we all back them prayerfully and financially. If we don't, who will? We are like their local body, and as their brothers and sisters, we should respond to their needs. They trust God for their debts and spiritual needs, and who does God use to fill these? Pray for them, believing that it makes a difference, or give from a loving heart, or both. To God be the Glory. Amen.

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